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THE SEAL OF HUGH O'NEILL.

BY REV. WILLIAM REEVES, D.D.



The house of O'Neill is so ancient, and its fortunes so intimately interwoven with the history of Ireland, that neither the antiquary nor historian will ever fail to discern in its events circumstances of interest according to his peculiar study.

This race, whose pedigree is traced back by Irish genealogists into the very vacuum of memory through *ninety-four* generations, enjoys the airy portions of its honours in common with many northern families; but it becomes a line in itself, and acquires severality when Donnell, on the death of his father Muircertach, in the year of our Lord 943 becomes monarch of the North, and in memory of his grandfather, Neal Glunduv, creates the family name of Ua Neill, or Niall's Grandson. During two succeeding centuries his descendants gave way before the rising power of the MacLaughlins who were also of the northern Hy-Neill, and a senior branch of the Kinel-Owen. Towards the close of the twelfth century, however, the O'Neills began to recover their former supremacy, and, by occasionally calling in the aid of the English who were their neighbours, finally broke the power of the rival house, who being more remote from the new element in the population, were more thoroughly Irish in their relations.

The following table represents the generations which intervene between that period and the individual whose seal is the subject of the accompanying wood-cut.

AODH MAC AEMH TOINLEASC
(HUGH THE LAZY-BODIED YOUTH;)

Some time Lord of Kinel-Owen; was slain by O'Loughlin in 1177, when Donnell O'Loughlin became Lord of Kinel-Owen, who died in 1188, and was succeeded by Murtogh O'Loughlin, who was slain in 1196.

NIALL RUADH
(NIAL ROE, OR RED.)

Alive in the year 1222, but not distinguished. The family honours devolved upon his brother.

AODH MEITH
(HUGH THE FAT.)

First appears in the Annals at 1198, 1199. The struggle for the lordship was carried on between him and the O'Loughlins, for he was deposed from it by them in 1200, and Conor O'Loughlin made Chief. He continued however to dispute the title. See the Four Masters at 1208, 1210, 1213, 1221. He died in 1230.

BRIAN

Advanced to the Lordship of Kinel-Owen through the influence of the English, on the deposition of Donnell O'Loughlin in 1238. Installed in 1241. Flourished during 1246, 1248, 1252, 1258. Slain in 1260 at the battle of Down. His seal bearing a mounted cavalier, and the legend S. BRIENI REGIS DE KENEL EOGAIN is published in the Proceedings of the R. Irish Academy, Vol. IV. p. 484; and in the Miscellany of the Celtic Society (1849) p. vii.

DOMHNALL
(DONNELL.)

Succeeded his cousin Aodh Buidhe in 1283. Deposed by the Earl of Ulster in 1286. In possession in 1290. Deposed and banished in 1291. Slays Brian O'Neill in 1295. Expelled in 1319 through the united power of the English and of the family of Hugh Boy, and forced to take refuge in Fermanagh. Soon after he recovered the lordship. He died in 1325 at Lough Leary, near Newtown Stewart. His name occurs three times in Rymer's Foedera; sc.: in 1302, *Douenaldus O'Nel* is one of the Magnates addressed by Edward I.

NIALL CULAN-ACH

Placed in the Chieftaincy by the Earl of Ulster on the deposition of his brother in 1286. In 1261 he had been elected in place of Aodh Buidhe who was banished: but he was deposed in 1262, and Aodh restored. In 1291 Donnell was deposed, and he put in his place by Richard de Burgo, Red Earl of Ulster, but soon after he was slain by his rival Donnell. In Rymer is a record

DOMHNALL OCE

Succeeded his father in claiming the Chieftaincy of Kinel-Owen, but was deposed by Donnell O'Loughlin in 1232 and slain by him in 1234. In 1238 it was recovered to the family by his elder brother.

AODH BUIDHE
(HUGH BOY OR THE YELLOW.)

First mentioned at 1259. Became Chief on his Uncle's death, in 1260. Banished in 1261, and Niall Culanach put in his place. Restored in 1262, and Niall deposed. In 1281, aided by the English, he signally defeated the Kinel-Connel under O'Donnell at the battle of Disert-da-crioich (Desertcreat). He was slain by MacMahon and the men of Oriel in 1283. His sons established themselves in the present County of Antrim, and assumed the title of Clann-Aodha Buidhe, anglicised Claneboy.

regarding the war in Scotland. (30 Ed. i.) In 1314 *Douenal O'Neel dux Hibernicorum de Tyrrown* summoned by Edward ii. to the war in Scotland. (7 Ed. ii.) He it was who in 1318 addressed the famous Complaint to Pope John xxii. recorded by John Fordun, in which he styles himself. "*Dovenaldus O'neyl rex Ultoniae, ac totius Hiberniae hereditario jure verus heres.*"

of the year 1275, in which he addresses Edward i. *N. Onel Rex I. de Inchecum.* (3 Ed. i.) His sons, in 1325 slew their cousin Cuuladh, heir to the lordship of Tyrone.

The present Viscount O'Neill, who is seventeenth in descent from Aodh Buidhe, is the senior surviving representative not only of this branch, but of the entire race.

AODH REAM-	BRIAN	CUULADH	BRIAN	HENRY
HAR (HUGH THE COR- PULENT.) He is the Odo of the accompanying seal.	Tanist of Tyrone; slain at Rath Lury (Maghera) in 1319, by the Clann-Hugh- Boy and Henry MacDavil.	Heir to the lord- ship of Tyrone; slain by his Cousins the sons of Niall Culanach in 1325.	Raised to the Chieftaincy in 1291, by the Earl of Ulster, on the murder of Niall Cul- anach. He was supported by MacMartin, and MacEoin, thro' whose means Donnell his ri- val was driven into Tyrone.— He was slain in 1295 by Don- nell son of Brian, and was suc- ceeded by his brother Henry.	He succeeded to the Chieftaincy of the Clan- Hugh-Boy, on his brother's death in 1295. In 1335 he was summoned to Scotland by Ed. iii. as one of the "Principa- les Hiberniae."— (Rymer, Fed. 9 Ed. iii.) He died in 1347.

AODH REAMHAR, son of Donnell, appears in the Irish Annals for the first time at the year 1337, as making peace with the men of Oriel and Fermanagh who had slain Hugh Boy in 1283; and thus strengthening himself by the Irish interest. But previously to this he is introduced to notice in an English record, namely a summons of Edward iii. in 1335 to the Magnates of Ireland to attend him in his war in Scotland. In this Instrument the names of 56 Knights, 14 Irish Princes, and 111 Esquires are set out, and foremost in the second class is IREWERE ONEEL DE ULVESTER, and tenth in the list is HEN. ONEEL, his first cousin. (Rymer Foedera, 9 Ed. iii.) IREWERE, which to an English eye is inexplicable, is simply a phonetic compound of the two Irish words Aodh Reamhar, the former pronounced as *Ee*, the latter *Rauer*. His subsequent history we learn from the Four Masters.

In 1339 HUGH REAMHAR O'NEILL led an army into Tirconnell. In 1343 he joined the Mac-Sweenys in deposing Niall O'Donnell. In 1345 he entered Lough Neagh with boats, to plunder the opposite country, but the Clann-Hugh-Boy mustering their forces attacked him; and after considerable loss on both sides, he made his escape in his boats. In 1353 Gormlaith, daughter of O'Donnell, his wife, died. In 1354 he sustained a signal defeat from the Clan-Hugh-Boy who were aided by the English of Dundalk. In 1358 he gained a victory over the men of Oriel and Fermanagh. At 1364 the same Annals thus record his death: "Hugh O'Neill, the best man of the Irish of his time, died, having gained the palm for humanity, hospitality, valour, and renown." He was succeeded by his son Niall More, who survived till 1397.

The legend upon his seal is

S. ODONIS ONEILL REGIS HYBERNICORVM VLTONIE :

The Irish, "Aodh" is Latinized by "Odo" and pronounced, as has been observed, *Ee*.

This beautiful specimen of the sphragistic art is the finest work of the kind, connected with Ireland, which remains, and far exceeds in elegance the other seals of the O'Neill family. The high relief of the scutcheon, and the bevelled edge with the small quatrefoils running round the margin, are very remarkable. It is to be observed too, that the Hand, as in other early seals of the family, is a Dexter one, the same as that which now appears in the arms of the present Lord. "Argent, a hand Gules" was the heraldic characteristic of Baronetcy when created in 1611, and 1619, in consideration of O'Neill's extermination; and it was remarkable to find Sir Bryan O'Neill, of Bakerstown, in 1642, and Sir Henry O'Neill, of Killelagh, in 1666, the one in the English, and the other in the Irish Baronetage, adopting an achievement which they were supposed to win from *themselves*.

The diagonal cross-hatching on the field of the seal is not to be regarded as heraldic, being probably an expedient of the engraver to give effect to the relief of the hand.

All that is known of its history is that it came into the hands of Horace Walpole, in the course of the last century, from the neighbourhood of Belfast. This appears from his own description of Strawberry Hill, printed there in 1784:

"A silver seal, extremely ancient, of Hugh O'Neal, king of Ulster; brought out of Ireland by Mr. William Bristow."—p. 64.

It occurs again in Mr. Robins' Sale Catalogue, Fifteenth day, lot 10:

"A curious antique silver Seal, extremely ancient: this remarkable relic once belonged to Hugh O'Neil, King of Ulster. Brought from Ireland by Mr. William Bristow."—p. 151.

It was knocked down at the sale for £73, and came into the hands of the late Otway Cave, Esq., in the possession of whose representatives it is supposed still to be. An electrotype copy is in the cabinet of a collector, and from an impression of it in wax, the above drawing was made.